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LETTER DATED 26 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Certain new information regarding the United Nations designated safe area of Srebrenica has come to the attention of certain of our officials.

Briefly, following earlier less detailed reports, we have received the eye-witness statements of two completely independent and separate sources, individuals, citing that as many as 40 to 50 citizens of Srebrenica may be being held in a prison in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Apparently none of these Srebrenica prisoners is registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). They are held in isolation from other prisoners and it is not even clear to what extent the central authorities in Belgrade may be aware of the circumstances.

The alleged prison camp is in the Serbian town of Sremska Mitrovica, where the two witnesses were also held prisoner, one a Croatian citizen and the other a Bosnian (both men otherwise unknown to each other). The Srebrenica prisoners were allegedly held in an isolated/secret section of the prison as drawn by one of the witnesses on the attached map (see annex). The witnesses also mention an American and another Pakistani citizen held at the same prison, again corroborating their own separate accounts.

More precisely, one of the witnesses describes a citizen of Srebrenica more specifically by name and physical description, which matches exactly that of a father and husband reported missing to ICRC by his wife.

Although the thesis that some victims of the assault on Srebrenica could still be held prisoner seems highly unusual or even more improbable to some, nonetheless, every opportunity must be taken to find survivors or to find out what may have happened to them after capture. My Government is undertaking bilateral steps; however, the Security Council continues to have a legal interest in the fate of all those who were subject to its protection under the relevant resolutions designating Srebrenica a safe area.

I would kindly request that the Security Council undertake an urgent review of the situation and further investigation in order to secure the safety of

those who may still be alive and also to ascertain the complete facts and the fate of those who have been identified.

We have been most reluctant to allow this information into the public domain for fear of jeopardizing the very lives we intend to save or, alternatively, of being accused of sensationalism. However, this information is already gradually leaking, and the best way to secure the safety as well as evidence regarding these alleged prisoners is to put the potential perpetrators on notice and to have the Council act with urgency and the authority bestowed upon it.

May I ask your kind assistance in circulating the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Annex